Acknowledgement of Country and Prayer for a Mercy Day gathering

**Theme: Sowing the seeds of hope, one step at a time**

**Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country**

*We gather today as people of Mercy, acknowledging the original custodians of the land on which we are situated. We acknowledge and give thanks for the approximately 500 First Nations of this land, their people and their culture, their care for the land, plants, animals and waterways.*

*We pay our respects to elders, past and present. May we be strengthened in our resolve to walk with them and all First Nations peoples on the journey towards reconciliation and healing.*

**Introduction**

In our Mercy journey, we have perhaps been inspired by significant people who have shown us a pathway of mercy through their attitudes, their generosity of mind and spirit and their practical actions.

We can also draw on strands from our Wisdom traditions to nourish and inspire us along the way. The Gospel stories, the words of respected Church leaders and the expressions of our ministry’s Vision, Mission or Purpose and Values can provide inspiration and guidance. They are also a source of hope, shaping the ways we can plant seeds of hope in the lives of those we meet.

We now take this opportunity to reflect on some words of wisdom, some sources of hope.

**Reading 1: Luke’s account of the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry**

“Jesus came to Nazara where he had been brought up and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it is written:

‘*The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,*

*To proclaim a year of favour from the Lord*.’

Jesus then rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, ‘This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening.’’ (Gospel of Luke Ch 4: vs 16-21)

**Reading 2: Pope Francis** **speaking during the Jubilee Year of Mercy in 2016**

Pope Francis reminded those gathered in St Peter’s Square in Rome at a Jubilee audience on June 30, 2016, that “the works of mercy are not theoretical ideas, but concrete testimonies. They oblige us to roll up our sleeves to alleviate suffering.”

**Reading 3: Excerpts from your ministry’s Vision, Mission or Purpose Statement**

**{include as appropriate}**

**A time of quiet reflection: ‘What stays with you from the Readings?’**

**Prayers for this Mercy Day celebration**

We pray especially for those whom we accompany in our ministry of service, that we may be a face of God’s mercy and compassion to everyone we meet.

1. We acknowledge all the children and teenagers placed in our lives and all young people whose aspirations and inquiring minds speak of the potential of the human spirit. May they grow in wisdom as they find their place of safety and sense of purpose.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

1. We acknowledge the elders in our communities, the older women and men who gift us through their example, their words and their memories. As they look back on their experiences of life, sometimes with gratitude, sometimes with grief, may they be reassured through our warm smiles and tender care.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

1. We acknowledge all those who are ill or dying and those who are confused or anxious in mind or spirit. May those who care for them with dignity and compassion and those who journey patiently with them be real sources of comfort and strength.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

1. We acknowledge the struggles of those who are poor, hungry, homeless or abused and those enduring injustice or violence. Warm our hearts as we reach out with practical support and give us courage to work respectfully alongside them to address the causes of their suffering.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

1. We acknowledge that our lands, skies, oceans and waterways have fallen victim to pollution and that poor and disadvantaged people are suffering as a consequence. Motivate all people of good will to persist in their efforts to care for all who share our common home.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

1. We pray for all who are engaged in the ministries of Community Service, Education, Health and Aged Care within of Mercy Ministry Companions. May our contributions be guided by fidelity to our mission and underpinned by our core values of Compassion, Hope, Hospitality, Justice and Respect.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

1. We pray silently for the significant people in our Mercy journey and for our own needs.

***Response: Empower us to make a difference in the lives of others***

[Prayers adapted from Clough, Joy (2009) *Intercessions of Mercy* Skokie IL: ACTA Publications, p. 314]

**So we pray …**

In the words of Mary Sullivan rsm, a Sister of Mercy of the Americas, who died in March 2023, we remain inspired by Catherine McAuley’s vision:

“*If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it – one person at a time; one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk – one person at a time*.”

Let us take to heart the example of Catherine and of all our founders and may we have the courage and confidence to respond as they did, to the needs of the people around us, Amen.

**Prepared by Annette Schneider rsm**